

Lesson 7: The Gospel in Samaria

Acts 8

This week we witness the evangelism of Philip. Wherever he goes and whomever he meets, Philip shares the Word of the Lord, the good news of Christ. Let's approach this week mindful that those we encounter might need to know the good news that has been entrusted to us. May our encounters with the Lord on the pages of His Word stir in our hearts until our feet and hands and mouths are stirred to action, too.

The Persecuted Church

Read Acts 8:1-3.

1. Who is introduced in Acts 8:1? How do you see his involvement in the persecution of believers evolve? See Acts 7:58, 8:1 and 8:3.
2. What was the result of the persecution of the church? How does that fit with Jesus' words in Acts 1:8?

The Gospel in Samaria

Read Acts 8:4-13.

3. What did the scattered believers do in Acts 8:4? Where were the apostles (Acts 8:1)? What does that teach you about the role of all believers?

“Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.”

Acts 8:30-31

4. One of the believers who went to Samaria was Philip. Philip, a Hellenist believer and not a Hebrew believer living in Jerusalem, knew what it was like to be “on the outside.” It might be that his background, his knowledge of the Greek language and his life experiences specially equipped him to take the gospel to the Samaritans.
5. What are some things about your background, experiences or personality that God has or will use as He sends you out to spread His Word and love to others?

Israel was established as one nation of twelve tribes who descended from Abraham. The nation later divided into a Northern and Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom kept the name Israel. It occupied the land referred to as Samaria in the New Testament. The Southern Kingdom was known as Judah. It occupied the land in the southern part of modern Israel, which was known as Judea during the time of the apostles, and Jerusalem was its capital.

6. From 2 Kings 17:6, what happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel? This was in 722B.C.
7. Read 2 Kings 17:24 and 17:41. What was the cultural and religious climate of Samaria?

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria. Samaria became a land settled by foreigners, and the Israelites who were not taken to Assyria intermarried with the foreigners and with the native Canaanites. Over seven-hundred years after the conquest, the Samaritans still had the expectation of a Messiah, and they retained some of the Old Testament Scriptures, but the Jews in and around Jerusalem looked down on them because they had intermarried and had incorporated some of the religious traditions of the Assyrians and surrounding nations. They were seen as neither Jew nor Gentile.⁷

8. Jesus went to Samaria during His life on earth, and He met with the woman at the well. What was a point of contention between the Samaritans and the Judeans according to the woman in John 4:19-20? How does Jesus resolve the issue in John 4:21-24?

⁷ Polhill, John B. *Acts*. The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995. Pages 214-15.

9. Read the rest of their exchange in John 4:25-30. Whose coming was the Samaritan woman anticipating, and how does she respond to Jesus? From John 4:39-42, describe the response of many of the Samaritans to Jesus.

10. What happened in Acts 8:6-8 when Philip went to the Samaritans and began to preach the gospel?

11. From Acts 8:9-11, who was Simon? What had he been doing in the city? What did he think about himself, and what was the people's opinion?

12. From Isaiah 2:11, who is to be exalted? What are some ways that we exalt ourselves rather than the Lord?

13. How did Philip's message affect Simon (Acts 8:12-13)?

Read Acts 8:14-24.

14. What happened in Samaria when Peter and John came?

15. What did Simon try to obtain from Peter and John in Acts 8:18-19? How did he do it?

16. How did Peter respond to Simon in Acts 8:20-23?

17. From 2 Corinthians 7:8-10, what is one way that we can pray for people when we sense that they are caught in the grip of sin?

18. In Acts 8:24, we see Simon respond to Peter's instruction to repent by instead asking Peter to pray for him. Search your own heart. Is there any area where God is asking you to interact directly with Him but you are instead relying on another person?

The Ethiopian Eunuch

Read Acts 8:25-40.

19. How does Philip end up speaking to the eunuch? What do you notice about Philip in Acts 8:26-27 and 8:29?
20. What is the Ethiopian eunuch's response to Philip when Philip approaches his chariot?
21. From Acts 8:30-35, how does Philip share the gospel with the eunuch?
22. Paul wrote Romans 10:14-15, but this eunuch certainly would have agreed with him. Can you think of a situation like the one between Philip and the eunuch that might occur in your own life? Ask the Lord to equip you for any "meetings with an Ethiopian" that He might have for you.
23. What did the eunuch do after Philip presented the gospel in Acts 8:36? How is that surprising when you consider the setting of their journey in Acts 8:26?
24. Where was Philip headed according to Acts 8:26? Where did he end up in Acts 8:40? What do you make of that?

Prepare for Life

After believing, the eunuch couldn't wait to be baptized. Even the desert couldn't keep the new believer dry. We've not the time nor cause to debate the many different means and methods of baptism. Let's focus on the significance of our being raised to newness of life in Christ!

Read Romans 6:3-9.

25. What has been crucified and buried with Christ?

26. How do we now walk?

27. As a result of our identification with Christ's death and resurrection, what is our new relationship to sin and death?

28. What does that mean to you?

Lecture Notes: Lesson 7